

K-534

**Murray - McCall House
Queen Street, Chestertown
2nd half 18th Century**

The Murray-McCall House is located on the corner of Queen and Cannon Streets - Lot No. 10 of the original plat of Chestertown. This location has an interesting history, as it includes some of the most prominent figures of 18th and 19th century Chestertown.

Dr. William Murray, who had built and occupied the front section of the Hynson-Ringgold House, purchased Lot No. 10 in 1761 from merchant, William Ringgold (1). By the time he wrote his will (1768), he was residing there and bequeathed it, after his wife's widowhood, to his sons, William and Alexander (2). In 1777, William Murray, Jr. purchased his brother's half interest and in 1785, sold it to Anthony Banning, another merchant (3).

After Banning's death in 1789, his real estate, which consisted of the Rose Hill Farm and at least 3/4 of Lot No. 10 in Chestertown, descended to his daughter Katherine. She and Benjamin Chew, Jr. were married shortly thereafter and may have occupied the house on this corner of the lot, as well as Rose Hill. By the time they sold the lot in 1802, they had been living in Philadelphia for a number of years (4).

James Carson, Schoolmaster of Philadelphia, purchased the lot in 1803 and mortgaged it to the Chews. In 1816 a confirmatory deed stated that the mortgage had been paid (5). It remained in Carson's ownership and was passed on to his heirs. They, however, failed to pay the taxes and the house was subsequently purchased by Miss Caroline Thompson from the Tax Collector (6).

The house was tenanted during Miss Thompson's ownership, from at least 1841 to her death in 1885. She bequeathed it to her niece Lottie Spencer (Roberts) (7), who sold it in 1916 to the recently widowed Mrs. Joseph Wickes. Since that time the house has had many owners. Prior to its recent rehabilitation, it had been an apartment house.

During the rehabilitation, evidence of several additions and alterations was discovered. The changes spanned its 200 plus years of occupation. The plan of the original two-story, three-bay house consisted of an entry hall and parlor, like the Chambers Tenement, plus a one-story service wing which may have housed a dining room in addition to the kitchen. The second story of the main section originally contained two chambers and the stairhall. All interior walls were of vertical beaded boards, with the beads occurring on both sides of each board. This curious feature has been found at the Buck-Bacchus Store, as well as other buildings dating from the 1730's. Notably, the heavy framing members have gunstock corner posts, another feature usually found in early to mid-18th century buildings of the area.

Footnotes:

1. Land Records: Lib. JS 29, fol. 381.

The sale of this lot for 340 coincides with William Ringgold's purchase of the Smith House on Water Lot No. 8 (see Smith-Ringgold House). The sale price indicates a substantial house or more on the property at the time. Dr. Murray did not sell his adjoining property until 1767, but may have rented it out in the meantime.

2. Wills: Lib. 4, fol. 352.

3. Land Records: Lib. DD 5, fol. 241;

Lib. EF 6, fol. 486.

William Murray was listed as a physician living in Annapolis. Anthony Banning lived in Talbot County previously, but came to Kent during its pre-Revolutionary prosperity and purchased the Rose Hill Farm from the estate of James Calder, a prominent attorney. To confuse matters more, Banning sold 1/4 of the lot (adjoining Lot No. 11) to Alexander Murray, who returned to Chestertown after serving in infant Navy during the revolution.

4. Land Records: Lib. BC 8, fol. 452.

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6. Land Records: Lib. JNG 9, fol. 285.

The deed was recorded in 1843, but in the Tax Assessment for 1841, Miss Thompson was already in possession of the house and lot. It was occupied by S. & H. Wilmer and the house was appraised for \$700.00. Mrs. Thompson was a granddaughter of Dr. William Murray and lived with her widowed sister across the street in the Hands House.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. K-534

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Carson House, Banning House, Miss Thompson tenement

and/or common Murray-McCall House

2. Location

street & number 109 South Queen Street ☐ not for publication

city, town Chestertown ☐ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Kent

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Davy H. McCall

street & number 109 South Queen Street telephone no.: 410-778-4419

city, town Chestertown state and zip code MD 21620

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kent County Courthouse liber MLM 27

street & number Cross Street folio 184

city, town Chestertown state MD

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title N/A

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. K-534

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Murray-McCall House stands on the corner of Queen and Cannon Streets on part of lot no. 10 in Chestertown. It was built in the 18th century on a low brick and stone foundation. It is composed of two parts, the front section two bays wide and two stories tall. The rear section, set at right angles to the front is about the same size but has irregular fenestration (3 bays on first and one on second). At the end, the building is an enclosed leanto porch.

Some of the original beaded weatherboard still exists on the lower story and several of the window frames appear original, with an ogee backband. The window sash are composed of a mixture of 6/6 panes and 2/2 panes, the latter being late 19th century alterations. The facade possesses a two-story porch with pierced splat balustrade and brackets. Before it was restored it had a wood deck on both stories, but the first story deck was replaced with brick on grade during the rehabilitation.

The plan of the house consists of a stairhall/entry with parlor in the front section. In the original back wing, along Cannon Street is a large dining room in what was probably the service wing. In a two story leanto away from the street are utility areas, kitchen and breakfast room.

Original beaded board partitions separate the rooms in the main part of the building, on both stories. The stair is also original and possesses a beaded board spandrel, close string balustrade and winders in the corner. A purling stair/ladder to the attic is enclosed above the winder. It ascends without regard to the direction of the roof rafters in such a way as to produce the least amount of headroom.

Prior to the recent rehabilitation the house had seen several remodelings, with a corner fireplace being inserted in the dining room and kitchen in the place of the new porch.

When the floor was removed, to renew some deteriorated joists and sills, the joists were found to have small areas chiseled out for lath to lay beneath the floorboard joints. Several other early features, including gun-stock corner posts, a wider chimney base, wrought nails and some artifacts suggested an earlier date than the existing millwork, which appears to be from around 1800.

8. Significance

Survey No.

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
— prehistoric	— archeology-prehistoric	— community planning	— landscape architecture	— religion
— 1400-1499	— archeology-historic	— conservation	— law	— science
— 1500-1599	— agriculture	— economics	— literature	— sculpture
— 1600-1699	X architecture	— education	— military	— social/
X 1700-1799	— art	— engineering	— music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	— commerce	— exploration/settlement	— philosophy	— theater
— 1900-	— communications	— industry	— politics/government	— transportation
		— invention		— other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Lot No. 10 has an interesting history, associated with some of the most prominent figures in 18th and 19th century Chestertown. The house on the lot appears from physical evidence, uncovered during its recent rehabilitation, to date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The house retains many features which have accumulated over its two hundred year development.

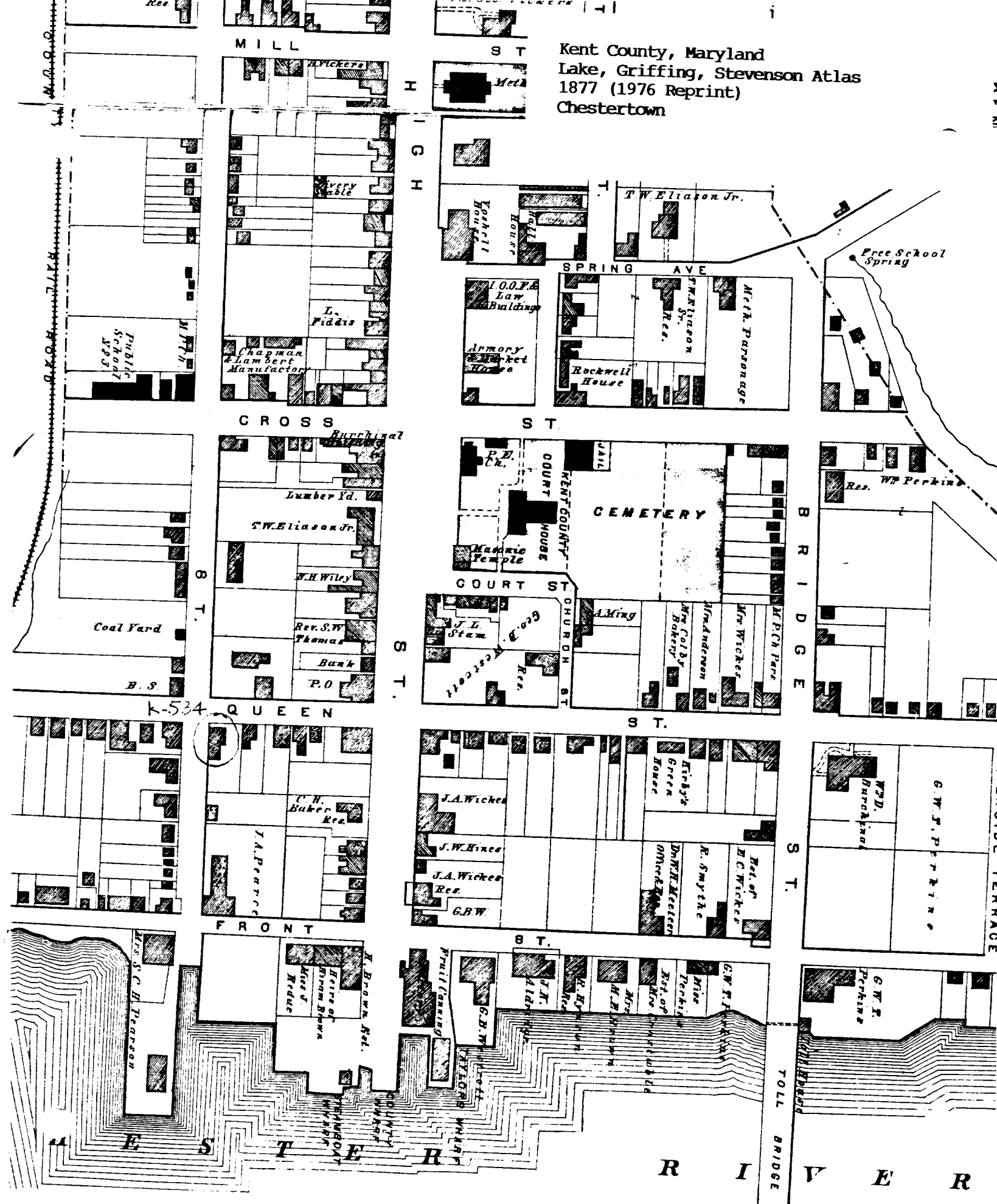
In 1761 William Murray, who owned and occupied the adjoining Lot No. 7, purchased Lot No. 10, "...fronting on Cannon Street..." (181.5') from Merchant, William Ringgold, for £340. Murray sold his residence on Lot No. 7 in 1767 and moved to Lot No. 10. When he made out his will the following year he bequeathed his "...dwelling house..." to his wife Ann, after which it would descend to his sons William and Alexander. In 1777 William Murray purchased his brother's half interest devised them by their father. In 1785 Dr. Murray, of Anne Arundel County, sold the lot to Anthony Banning, a merchant who had previously lived in Talbot County. Later that year, Banning sold a quarter of the lot "...on which stands the Stone House.." to its occupant, Alexander Murray. (the northeast part of the lot, farthest from Cannon St.).

After Banning's death in 1789, his real estate, consisting of Rose Hill and at least lot No. 10 in Chestertown, descended to his daughter Katherine. When Katherine and her husband, Benjamin Chew, Jr., then residing in Philadelphia, sold the lot in 1803, for £450, it was occupied by Reverend Joseph Douglas. James Carson, Schoolmaster of Philadelphia, purchased the lot and mortgaged it back to the Chews. In 1816 a confirmatory deed stated that the mortgage had been paid.

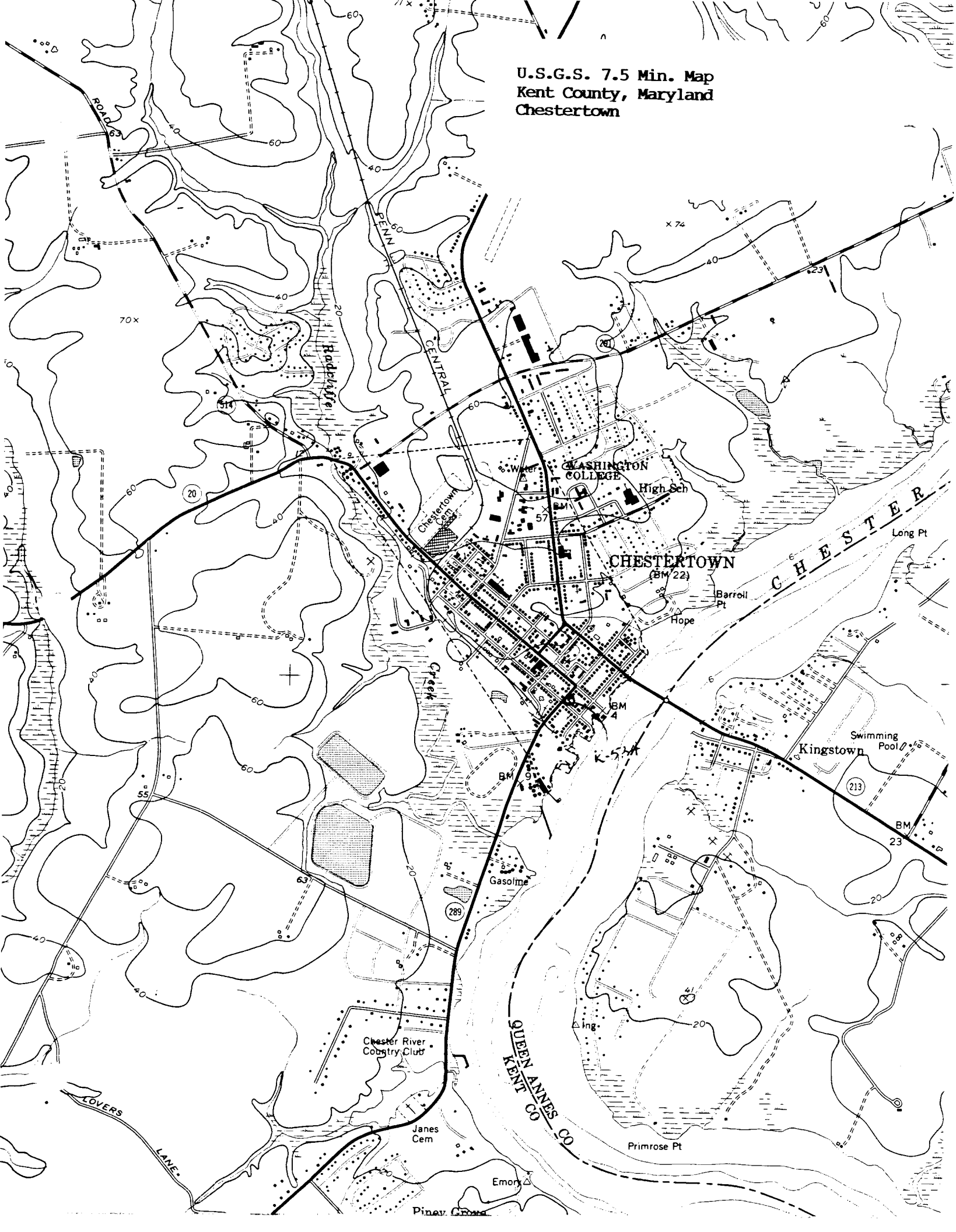
The next transaction occurred in 1843 when Miss Caroline Thompson purchased part of Lot No. 10, on which the house stands, from the Collector of Tax. (The heirs of James Carson had not paid their taxes). However, in the Chestertown Tax Assessment of 1841, Miss Thompson was already in possession of the lot, then in the occupation of S + H Wilmer. The house was valued at \$700.00.

Miss Caroline Thompson lived into her one hundredth year, dying in 1885. Her will does not mention the house in which she was living since it had been left to her by her sister, Mrs. Richard Ringgold in 1849 for her lifetime. She does mention her house on the corner of Princess and Cannon Streets, "now occupied by William Palmer," which she devised to her niece, Lottie Spencer. "Lottie" Spencer Roberts sold the house in 1916 to Mrs. Joseph Wickes.

Kent County, Maryland
Lake, Griffing, Stevenson Atlas
1877 (1976 Reprint)
Chestertown



U.S.G.S. 7.5 Min. Map
Kent County, Maryland
Chestertown





Murray McCall House - K-534

Chestertown
west

M. Bowne

March 1996